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SUBJECT: EMBASSY BRIDGETOWN EXPANDS OUTREACH TO ISLAMIC COMMUNITIES
AT RAMADAN

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) Following a successful inaugural Iftar celebration for Ramadan 2007, Embassy Bridgetown significantly expanded outreach to Eastern Caribbean Islamic communities in 2009 with Iftar events in three countries -- Barbados, St. Lucia, and St. Kitts and Nevis. All three events were well attended, with participants expressing appreciation for the Embassy's engagement. The events helped the Embassy expand contacts in the commercial and NGO sectors in all three countries and, in Nevis, to introduce us to a large community of mostly expatriate Muslim students at a local university. These contacts will be increasingly relevant as Iran and Libya take a greater interest in the region. End summary.

BARBADOS

¶2. (U) Approximately 35 people attended the Barbados Iftar at the Accra Hotel on September 8, including leading figures from all of Barbados' four Islamic centers. Embassy's POLECON chief hosted and read the President's Ramadan message, while another Emboff gave brief remarks detailing her personal experiences as an American Muslim. Local Islamic community leader Suleiman Bulbulia also delivered remarks that were overwhelmingly positive and appreciative of our strengthening relationship. The local community also used this event as a cornerstone to do their own outreach to local media to educate Barbadians about Ramadan. All remarks from the Iftar were posted on the Embassy website.

ST. LUCIA

¶3. (U) The Iftar for St. Lucia was held on September 16 at the Chic Restaurant in the Royal St. Lucian Resort. It was attended by some 20 people, mostly from the Islamic Association of St. Lucia. That group is headed by Mr. Rasheed Popo as CEO, Mr. Azez as the assistant CEO, and Sergeant Willie (aka Mr. Tariq) as the Secretary. Despite some antagonism within different branches of the Islamic community in St. Lucia, the event went well, with opening remarks given by Emboff as host and by Mr. Tariq speaking on behalf of the association. Prayers for men and women were held simultaneously in the conference room, shortly after sundown. The association was very pleased with U.S. sponsorship of the event and looked forward to greater engagement in the future and expressed their hope to be able to meet with the new U.S. Ambassador.

NEVIS

¶4. (U) The Embassy hosted an Iftar on September 16 at the Mt. Nevis Hotel for the Muslim community. Over 60 attended, including both local Nevisian Muslims and students from the Muslim Student Union at the Medical University of the Americas in Nevis. The Iftar was strongly supported by the venue host, Dr. Adly Meguid, who is also a

Fulbright alumnus, and included remarks by Emboff host and local community leaders. The halal meal served after the call to prayers just after the sunset was a resounding success -- prompting one participant to remark that these sorts of events are a great example of what everyone already knows -- that the U.S. is an open and giving society.

COMMENT

15. (SBU) In addition to breeding enormous goodwill with a number of small, moderate Sunni communities throughout the Eastern Caribbean, these events served to expand our contact bases in the academic, business, and NGO communities. With both Iran and Libya increasing contacts in the Eastern Caribbean, developing these relationships will help us counter potential negative characterizations of the U.S. in the region and maintain open lines of communication with those who have their fingers on the pulse of the Islamic communities here.

HARDT